

Abstract

Tactical Victory Leading to Operational Failure: Rommel in North Africa by MAJ Jeffrey L. LaFace, United States Army, 44 pages.

Since the end of the Cold War, the worldview is that the United States is presently the only superpower. The expectation, within the Department of Defense (DOD) and the world's other military institutions, is that this status will exist for the next twenty years or until the year 2020. Even as the world's only superpower, the United States military has adopted a formal approach to joint and coalition warfare as the methodology to fight future military conflicts. This is for two reasons. The first reason is to gain world and national political consensus and legitimacy for any operation requiring the use of US military forces. The second reason is even the military resources of the United States are limited and we must conduct military operations as part of a joint coalition force in order to reach our and the coalition's political endstate.

This monograph asks the question: Can tactical victories guarantee the accomplishment of the coalition's operational aim? This monograph will use the example of the German Afrika Korps in North Africa to answer this question. The purpose of the monograph is to show the outcome when a more militarily capable member of a coalition dictates the conduct of military operations. This consideration is relevant to the United States Army due to our superpower status and our military capabilities relative to the rest of the world's military organizations. The monograph will show that Rommel's reliance on the tactical level of war and his lack of an operational understanding of what he was attempting to accomplish lead to their defeat in North Africa. Rommel's conducted tactical operations because he was not trained for or capable of conducting operational art. Because of this, he failed to support the strategic and operational aims of the political and military leadership. He lacked the cognitive creativity and therefore, the tension to support his government. Rommel's opportunism led to many victories on the battlefield but ultimately had an adverse effect on the Axis war effort.

Tactical Victory Leading to Operational Failure: Rommel in North Africa

**A Monograph
By
MAJ Jeffrey L. LaFace
United States Army**



**School of Advanced Military Studies
United States Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

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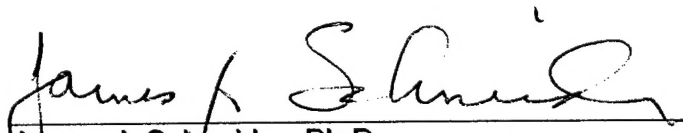
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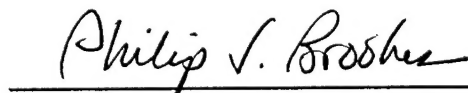
Approved by:


James J. Schneider, Ph.D.

Monograph Director


Robert H. Berlin, Ph.D.

Professor and Director Academic
Affairs, School of Advanced
Military Studies


Philip J. Brookes, Ph.D.

Director, Graduate Degree
Program

Accepted this 15th Day of May 2001

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	1
PREFACE	2
INTRODUCTION	5
CHAPTER ONE: LINKING POLICY TO TACTICS	10
POLICY, STRATEGY AND STRATEGIC ART	11
THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL OF WAR, OPERATIONAL ART AND OPERATIONAL DESIGN	15
TACTICALIZATION OF STRATEGY	23
CHAPTER TWO: <i>BLITZKRIEG</i> : EVOLUTION OF TACTICS TO HYPER-TACTICS.....	26
CHAPTER THREE: ROMMEL AND THE TACTICIZATION OF STRATEGY.....	32
GERMAN STRATEGY FOR NORTH AFRICA	32
ROMMEL'S LACK OF AN OPERATIONAL DESIGN	34
CONCLUSION	39
BIBLIOGRAPHY	41

PREFACE

ENTER THE "GREAT CAPTAIN?"

During the night of 31 March 1941, a lone British patrol occupied an observation post outside the Italian fort of El Agheila. The patrol consisted of a single scout car crewed by Lieutenants Fred "Dusty" Miller and James Clark with the wireless/radio operator, Corporal Farquhar and their driver Private Felton. The patrol belonged to the reconnaissance battalion of the Seventh Armored Division, the Eleventh Hussars.¹ Lt. Miller earlier in the evening made the comment that the war had "stopped breathing" as the patrol continued to observe the quite Axis positions outside of El Agheila. None of these four men had any idea that in the next few hours the war in North Africa would again begin to breath.

The British patrol came to occupy its position after the 500-mile pursuit and destruction of the Italian Tenth Army by General Sir Richard O'Connor's XIII Corps. From 9 December 1940 to 10 February 1941 at the cost of 500 killed, 1,373 wounded and 55 missing General O'Connor's tiny forces had destroyed the four corps of the Italian army. Originally, planned as a raid against the Italian forces in less than three months, XIII Corps captured 130,000 men, 400 tanks and 1200 guns.² In February, the capture of Tripoli appeared only a matter of

¹ Paul Carell, *Foxes of the Desert*, trans. by Melvyn Savill (Atglen, PA: Schiffler Publishing Ltd., 1994), pages 1-2.

² George Forty, *The Armies of Rommel*, (New York: Arms and Armour, 1999), page 74.

time. General O'Connor pressed General Sir Archibald Wavell, commander in chief of British force in the Middle East, to continue the attack west removing Italian forces from the coast of North Africa. On 10 February, General Wavell sent a message to the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill requesting permission to continue the attack. In the dispatch Wavell stated that the: "Extend of the Italian defeat at Benghazi makes it possible that Tripoli might yield to a small force if dispatched without undue delay."³ Unfortunately, Winston Churchill planned to employ three divisions of General O'Connor's XIII Corps in Greece. The purpose was to open a Balkan Front and threaten Axis interests in Southern Europe, where the Italian military forces operating out of Albania were also in trouble in their fight against the Greek Army.⁴

Although disappointing to General O'Connor and the British Army in North Africa the overall situation in the region did not cause them great concern. The Fourth and Fifth Indian Divisions were making great gains against the Italian forces in Italian East Africa and would soon recapture the lost British colony of Somaliland and liberate Abyssinia from Italian control. In the rest of Africa, the Italian forces were willing to hold what territory they still possessed.⁵ However, there were the German forces under the command of Lieutenant-General Erwin Rommel that started to arrive at the port of Tunis in February 1941.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid. Also see Len Deighton, *Blood, Tears, and Folly: An Objective Look at World War II* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1994), pages 269-270.

⁵ Deighton, *Blood, Tears, and Folly*, pages 282-287.

Nevertheless, even these forces did not appear to bother the British chain of command in Cairo.⁶

To General Wavell and the other general officers in the British Army in the Middle East, the Afrika Korps was there to bolster defensive capabilities of the Italian forces. General Rommel and his forces were to prevent the British from gaining complete control of the Mediterranean region and therefore threaten Germany's southern flank while Hitler deal with the Soviets. The British intelligence reported this to General Wavell and that Rommel was not to conduct extensive offensive operations until May of 1941 when all of his forces had arrived and then his mission was going to be defensive in nature.⁷ What General Wavell and the rest of the British chain of command failed to consider was Rommel's aggressive nature and his use of tactical measures to achieve victory in North Africa. Rommel felt that it was not necessary to link his operations to the strategic aims of Italy or Germany. This reasoning caused the British Army to suffer a series of tactical defeats. However, in the end, the Axis Powers would suffer an operational and strategic defeat due to the lack of campaign planning linking tactical battles to the overall political goals for the region. Rommel failed to understand the importance of time, space, means and political aims before beginning his tactical operations on 31 March 1941.⁸

⁶ Carell, *Foxes of the Desert*, pages 3-4.

⁷ Ibid., pages 3-5.

⁸ James R. Robinson, "The Rommel Myth" *Military Review* Number 5 (Sept-Oct 1997): page 81. Also available at www.cgsc.army.mil/milrev.

INTRODUCTION

"The real objective of having an army is to provide for war."

*Elihu Root, 1899*⁹

Since the end of the Cold War, the worldview is the United States is presently the only military superpower. The expectation, within the Department of Defense (DOD) and the world's other military institutions, is that this status will exist for the next twenty years or until the year 2020. Even as the world's only superpower, the United States military has adopted a formal approach to joint and multi-national (combined) warfare and as the methodology to fight future military conflicts. This is for two reasons. The first reason is to gain world and national political consensus and legitimacy for any operation requiring the use of US military forces. The second reason is the military resources of the United States are limited and we must conduct military operations as part of a joint-multi-national force in order to reach our combined political aims.¹⁰

The issue presented in this monograph is: Can tactical opportunism and victories by one member of a allied, coalition and/or multi-national force guarantee the accomplishment of the operational aim of the region? This monograph studies of the German Afrika Korps in North Africa to answer the question. The purpose of the monograph is to present the outcome of a

⁹ Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 100-1 The Army* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office (GPO), 14 June 1994), page 2.

¹⁰ Department of Defense, *Joint Publication (JP) 1 Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 10 January 1995), page III-13. Also available at www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel.

campaign when one member of a multi-national force conducts military operations in a region without linking the battles and engagements to their strategic aim. This consideration is relevant to the United States Army due to our superpower status and our military capabilities relative to the rest of the world's military organizations. The case study will show the conduct of Rommel's tactical battles and engagements led to an inefficient use of the Axis power's national resources and finally to their defeat in North Africa. Rommel's conduct of his tactical operations not only failed to support the strategic and operational aims of the Italian government but the aims of his government.

Hitler's strategic aim for the region and goal of Rommel and the German Afrika Korps was to protect his southern flank as part of a multi-national force with the Italian military as the lead organization.¹¹ The defeat of the Axis forces in North Africa allowed the Allies to invade Southern Europe, which was contrary to Hitler's strategic aim for the theater. Finally, the defeat in Africa of the Axis force was one of the contributing factors leading to the fall of Mussolini's government.

Until recently, the United States conduct of joint and multi-national warfare has been on an informal basis without a doctrinal foundation. From an historical perspective, the United States military conducted a series of limited joint and combined operations in the majority of her wars. At the end of the Gulf War, the Department of Defense (DOD) began to develop a doctrine-based methodology for the United States military to conduct joint and multi-national operations. The

¹¹ David Irving, *Hitler's War*, (New York: Avon Books, 1990), page 338.

reason for the development of this doctrine is to link the national strategies and aims of all coalition partners to develop a consensus and a common operational goal for the region.¹² This enables the coalition to develop an operational campaign plan, through partnership and respect, to achieve the multiple nations' political end state.¹³ Because of our status as the only superpower, many in the United States consider her the senior partner in any multi-national military operations. For some, this perception means that the political and military leaders of the United States can and should dictate the conduct and execution of the tactical, operational and strategic operations for the region. The limited economic-military capability of our allies and friends reinforces this perception. This perception is similar to the one that the German military, Rommel in particular, held about the Italian Army in North Africa.¹⁴ This is the reason that a case study of the German conduct of military operations in North Africa is applicable to today's army officer.

In Chapter One the monograph presents a doctrinal understanding of and the relationship between strategy and the operational level of war. The reader will understand the definitions and the relationship between strategies, strategic art, the operational level of war and operational art. The goal is to have an understanding of the supporting role of operational level of war to the strategic level and how the use of the elements of operational design assist in integrating

¹² Department of Defense, *JP 1 Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States*, pages II-1 to II-10.

¹³ Ibid., page III-13.

¹⁴ Irving, *Hitler's War*, page 324.

these two levels of war. This chapter includes the concept of art or ability of the operational commander to develop a campaign plan and employ military forces to achieve operational goals and strategic aims. The focus of the discussion at the strategic and operational level is to show the relationship between the nation's diplomatic, economic, military and informational elements or functions to reach its political aims in a region. The chapter also looks at the structure of operational art as presented by Dr. James J. Schneider's in his book *The Structure of Strategic Revolution: Total War and the Roots of the Soviet Warfare State*.¹⁵ This section includes a discussion to define the components of operational design, as outlined in *ST 3-0, Operations*,¹⁶ and its implications in developing a campaign plan. The next section focuses on Shimon Naveh's concept of cognitive tension and its effect on the command relationship between the theater-strategic, operational and tactical commanders. The discussion looks at its possible effect on an operational campaign as the tactical commander seizes opportunities presented on the battlefield and does not continue to operate within the parameters of his higher commander's guidance and intent.

Chapter Two explores the German conduct of tactical operations (*blitzkrieg*) and the influence of a decisive battle or victory as a methodology to achieve strategic aims. Rommel's reliance on tactical victories and his lack of an

¹⁵ James J. Schneider, *The Structure of Strategic Revolution: Total War and the Roots of the Soviet Warfare State* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1994), pages 35-51.

¹⁶ Department of the Army, *Student Text (ST) 3-0 Operations* (Fort Leavenworth: USA Command and General Staff College, 1 October 2000), pages 5-6 to 5-12.

operational viewpoint in executing the North African campaign led to the defeat of the Axis forces in North Africa. The Axis political and military leadership did not have the cognitive methodology (strategic and operational art) to link air, land and sea forces into an integrated multi-national campaign in North Africa and the Mediterranean Sea. They demonstrated the lack of an operational understanding of the effects of time, space, means and purpose in the campaign.

Chapter Three is a study of the failed Axis campaign in North Africa. The purpose is to explain the reasons for the failure of the Axis forces in North Africa. The study demonstrates that the German and Italian political and military leaders, through their lack of strategic and operational vision, attempted to use tactical land victories (tacticization of strategy) to achieve their national goals in North Africa. The lack a feasible and supportable campaign plan linking the strategic, operational and tactical goals did not provide the necessary guidance, intent and end state for the Axis commanders in the region.

Although this flawed military strategy led to many tactical victories for the Axis forces under Rommel's direction, it failed to consider the effects of time, space, means and purpose at the operational and strategic levels. Because of this failure at all levels of command, the Axis forces in the region did not have a feasible plan or the resources necessary to achieve victory.

Chapter One

LINKING POLICY TO TACTICS

"The essence of war is a violent clash between hostile military force to accomplish political purposes."

*FM 100-1 The Army*¹⁷

"War is nothing but a duel on a larger scale... War is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will... Force... is thus the means of war; to impose our will on the enemy is its object... we must render the enemy powerless; and that... is the true aim of warfare."

*Carl von Clausewitz*¹⁸

The conduct of warfare is a contest between two active and thinking opponents.¹⁹ The series of military actions that occur in a campaign may or may not resemble the campaign plan and stratagem developed before the war due to the adaptive and complex nature of modern warfare. Each military opponent will act and react to the other opponent to gain the initiative and attempt to impose his will on the other side.²⁰ The military forces, in a unified series of joint, multi-national and interagency actions attempt to achieve the policy goals established by the leaders of the coalition countries involved in the conflict. The joint, multi-

¹⁷ Department of the Army, *FM 100-1 The Army* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office (GPO), 14 June 1994), page 40.

¹⁸ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), page 75.

¹⁹ Robert Scales, "Adaptive Enemies: Achieving Victory by Avoiding Defeat," *Joint Forces Quarterly (JFQ)* Number 23 (Autumn-Winter 1999/2000): page 7. Also available at www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/jfq_pubs.

²⁰ Clausewitz, *On War*, page 75.

national and interagency forces accomplish this unity of effort through cooperation and coordination.²¹

The purpose of this unity of effort and action through cooperation and coordination is to achieve a series of operational goals and their national command authorities strategic aim for the theater. In order for cooperation and coordination to occur an understanding of the relationship and influence of the three levels of war: strategic, operational and tactical art is necessary. This understanding of the three levels of war and their interdependence assists commanders, to visualize, decide and direct the flow of operations in a logical manner to achieve an effect at the strategic, operational and tactical level.²²

POLICY, STRATEGY AND STRATEGIC ART

"War is no pastime... It is a serious means to a serious end... When whole communities go to war... the reason always lies in some political situation, and the occasion is always due to some political object. War... is an act of policy... Policy, then, will permeate all military operations, and... it will have a continuous influence on them."

*Carl von Clausewitz*²³

According to Carl von Clausewitz in his book *On War*, "warfare is the continuation of policy by other means."²⁴ To Clausewitz war was an act of policy, a political instrument and a way to continue political intercourse by other

²¹ Department of the Army, *ST 3-0 Operations*, page 2-1.

²² *Ibid.*, page 2-2.

²³ Clausewitz, *On War*, pages 86-87.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, page 87.

means.²⁵ Since war is an instrument of policy, the policy of the nation or coalitions' political leader will dictate the character of the war. The character of the conflict, as outlined by the political considerations present will not dictate the execution of military operations, but it is a planning factor or consideration in the conduct of the war, campaign and possibly a battle.²⁶ Therefore, not only does a statesman have to establish the nature or strategic focus of a war, but also the military commander must assist them. The military commander assists the policy makers in the formulation of the national strategy in the conduct of a war to define the nature of war as either limited or unlimited. This integrates and unifies the efforts and activities of the nation, its friends and allies. The goal is the efficient management of the conduct of a campaign or major operation to meet the political needs of all the concerned parties.²⁷

According to current joint doctrine the definition of the strategic level of war is:

The level of war at which a nation, often as a member of a group of nations, determines national or multinational (alliance or coalition) security objectives and guidance, and develops and uses national resources to accomplish these objectives. Activities at this level establish national and multinational military objectives; sequence initiatives; define limits and assess risks for the use of military and other instruments of national power; develop global plans or theater war plans to achieve these objectives; and provide military forces and other capabilities in accordance with strategic plans.²⁸

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., page 606.

²⁷ Ibid., pages 88-89.

²⁸ Department of Defense, *JP 5-00.1 Joint Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (JTTP) for Joint Campaign Planning (Third Draft)*, (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1 February 2000), pages GL-16 to GL-17.

To accomplish these strategic security objectives the nation or group of nations political and military leadership will develop a strategy to use national resources and capabilities to accomplish these objectives. Strategy is “the art and science of developing and employing armed forces and other instruments of national power in a synchronized fashion to secure national and multi-national objectives.”²⁹ In addition to military force, the nation or nations use diplomatic, informational and economic methods to secure the strategic endstate as the additional instruments of national power.³⁰

Therefore, all of the concerned political and military leaders use strategic art and science to define the nature and physical characteristics of the conflict to guarantee unity of effort and action. The use of strategic art defines the strategic endstate for the theater and the combination of the efforts by the diplomatic, informational, military and economic (DIME) instruments of national power for each of the multi-national partners in the theater. Additionally, the strategic endstate and the application of national power will define the military objectives. All partners must agree that the military objectives are feasible, suitable and acceptable as they develop and implement their campaign plan. The strategic art cognitively frames the strategic endstate for the multi-national forces (military and non-military) by creating the conditions necessary for the attainment of the

²⁹ Department of the Army, *ST 3-0 Operations*, page 2-2. Also, see *JP 3-0 Doctrine for Joint Operations*, also available at www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel.

³⁰ Department of Defense, *JP 5-00.1 Joint Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (JTTP) for Joint Campaign Planning (Third Draft)*, page GL-16.

strategic security goals. For the theater commander political and military cooperation and coordination at the national level defines the resources available, the acceptable level of risk and the physical size of the theater that his allocated assets will operate. This is the science of strategy.³¹ From the strategic assessment and resources, the theater commander decides if he must conduct a major operation or he must plan a campaign to accomplish the strategic goals and military objective for the theater.³²

A major operation is "a series of tactical actions (battles, engagements, strikes) conducted by various combat forces of a single or several services, coordinated in time and place, to accomplish operational, and sometimes strategic objectives in an operations."³³ A campaign and campaign plan is "a series of related military operations aimed at accomplishing a strategic or operational objective within a given time and space."³⁴ To make this decision the commander uses operational art and conducts operational design to achieve the strategic aims and military objectives required for the theater.

³¹ Department of the Army, ST 3-0, *Operations*, page 2-2.

³² Department of Defense, JP 5-00.1 *JTTP for Joint Campaign Planning (Third Draft)*, page I-1.

³³ Department of the Army, ST 3-0, *Operations*, page 2-2 to 2-3.

³⁴ Department of Defense, JP 5-00.1 *JTTP for Joint Campaign Planning (Third Draft)*, page GL- 4.

THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL OF WAR, OPERATIONAL ART AND OPERATIONAL DESIGN

“... what sort of mind is likeliest to display the qualities of military genius... the inquiring rather than the creative mind, the comprehensive rather than the specialized approach, the calm rather than the excitable head...”

Carl von Clausewitz³⁵

During the Napoleonic Era, warfare became more complex because of several sociological and economic reasons. This era also marked the end of ancient warfare and the beginnings of the modern warfare. The increase in the complexity of warfare was the result of several evolutionary steps. The first occurred as Napoleon introduced or refined several elements that continued to evolve during his numerous campaigns at end of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These elements included:

- The use of strategic war plans to integrate various theaters of war.

This includes the use of campaigns to achieve strategic objectives defined by the war plan.

- The full mobilization of the state's resources; “the nation at arms.”

Symmetrical armies raised by national conscription and supported by the civilian population to conduct total war.

- Armies became larger, professionally organized, equipped and doctrinally educated. This allowed armies to organize into corps-sized elements that were capable of conducting distributed maneuver and

³⁵ Clausewitz, *On War*, page 112.

sequenced battles, in a decentralized command and control environment.³⁶

Secondly, the conduct of warfare continued to evolve and increase in complexity as the United States and European powers began to industrialize their economies. Industrialization provided the tools necessary and in large enough quantities to conduct campaigns at the operational level of war. The areas affected by the industrialization of the economy were:

- Advances in weapons technology increased their range and lethality causing military formations to disperse on the battlefield.
- The industrial nation's economies developed the capability to wage war with large durable formations able to conduct successive battles in support of distributed campaigns.
- These economies also developed the ability to conduct distributed logistics through mechanical means (railroad and the internal combustion engine) to sustain the successive movements and the continual combat of their large durable formations.
- Advances in signal technology (telegraph, telephone and radio) gave the commander instantaneous communications to command and control his dispersed formations as they conducted a series of distributed operations and campaigns.

³⁶ Robert Epstein, *Napoleon's Last Victory: 1809 and the Emergence of Modern War*, School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) Readings, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1992), pages 263-286.

- Finally, these factors required the commander to have an operational vision in order to see the theater, operations and campaign as a whole system; this led to the requirement for a professionally trained and educated military.³⁷

The industrialization of a nation's economy and its military affected the design, organization, and the execution of campaigns and major operations. The initial indications of these effects became apparent as early as the American Civil War. It was not until the Soviet military began to develop its deep operations theory in the 1920s under M. N. Tukachevsky and other soviet military leaders that countries began to recognize the need for a new level of warfare. For most countries to include the United States, it was not until well after World War II that the need and implementation of an operational level of warfare developed. For the United States military, the 1986 edition of *FM 100-5 Operations* and its associated Airland Battle Theory completed the transformation required of the US Army to fight at the operational level of warfare.³⁸ As the commander of the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), General Starry completed the development and application of a cognitive and systematic approach to military

³⁷ James Schneider, *The Structure of Strategic Revolution: Total War and the Roots of the Soviet Warfare State* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1994), pages 11 to 53.

³⁸ Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Operational Theory*, (Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 1997), pages 250 to 252 and 262 to 276.

operations at this level of war. This process began at the end of the Vietnam War and was fully tested and examined during the Gulf War.³⁹

According to Shimon Naveh in his book, *In the Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Operational Theory*, a military organization must recognize the presence and act toward the following essential elements to conduct operational art:

- In war, the strategic aim is dominate not the physical destruction of an enemy's force.
- A military organization is a system that is hierarchical in nature and consists of many levels structurally.
- To conduct operational art a military organization must be able to divide and fragment an enemy formation with simultaneous attacks across its front and throughout its depth.
- The focus of these simultaneous attacks is the enemy's center of gravity. Identifying the enemy's strengths and weaknesses or deliberately creating an enemy vulnerability to exploit and attacking them with operational maneuver and strikes to cause operational shock in the enemy's system accomplish this.⁴⁰

These elements and the complexity of modern warfare required the introduction of a new level of warfare, the operational level to link tactical battles

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pages 1-23.

and engagements to strategic aims. The current joint definition of the operational level of war is:

The level of war at which subordinate campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted, and sustained to accomplish strategic objectives within theaters or areas of operations. Activities at this level link tactics and strategy by establishing operational objectives needed to accomplish the strategic objectives, sequencing events to achieve the operational objectives, initiating actions, and applying resources to bring about and sustain these events. These activities imply a broader dimension of time or space than do tactics; they ensure the logistic and administrative support of tactical force, and provide the means by which tactical successes are exploited to achieve strategic objectives.⁴¹

The purpose of the operational level of war is to link the tactical employment of force to obtain strategic objectives. During mission analysis the operational commander uses operational art to link the strategic level of war to the tactical level of war. Operational art is:

The employment of military forces to attain strategic and/or operational objectives through the design, organization, integration, and conduct of strategies, campaigns, major operations, and battles. Operational art translates the commander's strategy in operational design, and, ultimately, tactical action, by integrating the essential activities at all levels of war.⁴²

The purpose of operational art is to analyze the relationship between time, space, means and the purpose to develop a campaign plan to accomplish the strategic aim in the theater. The commander integrates the efforts of all the elements of national power (diplomatic, informational, military and economic) for

⁴¹ Department of Defense, *JP 5-00.1 JTTP for Joint Campaign Planning*, page GL-13. Also, see *FM 3-0 Operations*, pages 2-2 to 2-3.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pages GL-12 to GL-13.

all of the nations involved in the theater. The commander's campaign plan uses the elements of operational design to visualize the nature and design of the operation.⁴³ The elements of operational design are the framework for the idea that the commander uses to plan, prepare, execute and assess the major operation or campaign plan that he is conducting with the resources provided for the theater.⁴⁴ It is the US Army's method to view time, space, means, purpose as a whole, and integrate the tactical and strategic levels of war. According to *ST 3-0 Operations* the elements of operational design are:

- The endstate and military condition that attains the aims set for the campaign or operations.
- The centers of gravity are the capabilities, characteristics or localities that a military force derives its freedom of action, physical strength and will to fight.
- Decisive points and objectives are a geographic location, specific event, or a system that allows the commanders to gain a marked advantage.
- Lines of operations define the directional orientation of the force in time and space in relation to the enemy and its base of operation. Lines of operation connect a series of decisive points that lead to control of an objective or the defeat of an enemy.

⁴³ Department of the Army, *ST 3-0 Operations*, pages 5-2 to 5-6.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, page 5-6.

- Culminating point is either defensive or offensive in nature. Offensive culmination is the point in time and space where the combat power of the attacker no longer exceeds the defender's or the attacker's momentum is no longer sustainable or both. Defensive culmination is the point in time where the defender must withdraw to preserve his force.

- Operational reach, approach and pauses. Operational reach is the employment of decisive military power over a physical distance. An operational approach is the method (directly or indirectly) that the commander employs to attack the enemy's center of gravity. An operational pause is a deliberate halt to extend operational reach or to prevent culmination.

- Simultaneous and sequential operations are the methods employed by the commander to synchronize the actions of subordinate commanders in time, space and effects. The purpose is to link the theater strategy and design of the major operation or campaign to tactical execution.

- Linear and nonlinear operations. Friendly forces conduct an operation linear in nature when it is attempting to defeat an enemy force in a deeply arrayed or echelons in the formation. The seizure of multiple decisive points, the use of simultaneous attacks and maintenance of the initiative requires the use of nonlinear operations.

- Tempo is the rate of military operations. The use of tempo retains the initiative of the friendly force, maximizes its capabilities and its effect on the enemy's ability to react.⁴⁵

Based on the commander's visualization of the nature and design of the operations he will describe the outcome of the major operation or campaign through his intent and planning guidance. The commander articulates which part of the operation is decisive, how he will shape the battlefield for the decisive operation and how he will sustain the entire force. This is in relation to the time, space, resources and purpose given to him and he translates these elements into tactical actions or tasks to accomplish his operational objectives in the theater.⁴⁶ The commander directs the outcome of the major operation by assigning missions, prioritizing, allocating resources, assessing risk, and the current state of the operation to adjust and guide the organization to the accomplishment of the mission.⁴⁷

The operational commander using art has visualized, described and directed the conduct of the operation or campaign to achieve his objectives in support of the strategic aims for the theater. The commander creates a system through the methodology of operational design to link a series of mechanical acts (tactical tasks/actions) to accomplish an abstract thought (strategic aim).⁴⁸ He must

⁴⁵ Ibid., pages 5-6 to 5-12.

⁴⁶ Ibid., Figure 5-1, page 5-4.

⁴⁷ Ibid., page 5-2.

⁴⁸ Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, pages 5-8.

constantly assess the patterns of tactical actions against the strategic aim to control and assemble these actions into a coherent campaign plan or major operation. Shimon Naveh refers to this mental process as "cognitive tension."⁴⁹ Cognitive tension is the process of dividing the aim into operational objectives and tactical tasks to achieve the strategic aim. Therefore, the operational level of war is the implementation of the abstract to the physical.⁵⁰

"TACTICIZATION OF STRATEGY"⁵¹

"In peace we concentrate so much on tactics that we are apt to forget that it is merely the handmaiden of strategy."

*B. H. Liddell Hart, 1944*⁵²

According to Michael Handel, Professor of Strategy at the Naval War College, the three levels of war, strategic, operational and tactical, appear hierarchical in nature.⁵³ However, this model of strategy driving the conduct of operations and tactics is an over simplification of the relationship between the three levels. In reality operational and tactical considerations can and will influence the strategic level as much as strategy influences the operational and tactical levels. Based on the previous discussion the operational commander must constantly assess

⁴⁹ Ibid., page 9.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Michael Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought*, (Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001) page 73.

⁵² Jay Shafritz, ed., *Words on War: Military Quotations from Ancient Times to the Present*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1990), page 390.

⁵³ Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought*, page 353.

the short-term effects of the tactical battles and engagements against the long-term effect desired by the strategy. If this assessment does not occur, the "tacticization of strategy" will occur.

This occurs for two reasons. The first is the result of not developing a fully formulated strategy for the theater. If strategy and policy are not the driving forces in the war then tacticization of strategy is the result. By default, if the political, military leaders emphasize the success of battles and engagements (short-term results) their strategy becomes a by-product or afterthought.⁵⁴ The second reason is not viewing the war and its conduct as a whole system. The preoccupation and over-emphasis of the results of battles and the military aspects of an operation do not consider all the elements of national power. Although the winning of battles and engagements are important, the conflict is viewed as a whole situation in order to establish a unity of effort or action between the nations' diplomatic, informational, military and economic efforts.⁵⁵

According to Mao Tse-tung, the conduct of battles and engagements is an integral and organic part of the overall campaign plan. However, they are only a part of the overall campaign plan, not the plan. The campaign plan is the basis for the conduct and flow of the battles.⁵⁶ Without a fully developed policy and strategy for the theater and a supporting campaign plan it is impossible for the operational level commander to assess the conduct of the campaign. Without

⁵⁴ Ibid., page 354.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pages 355-357.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pages 247-248.

the ability to assess the campaign, the conduct of the operation becomes dysfunctional and lacks the unity of effort necessary to integrate all the elements of national power. The operational commander will lack the cognitive tension and creativity to properly direct the conduct of the plan or make adjustments to the plan as opportunities present themselves. The commander will simply apply tactical solutions to the problem and he may not have the experience, resources or the objectivity to achieve the strategic aims for the region.⁵⁷ He will take the first step without considering the last step.⁵⁸

In the evolution of the conduct of warfare, Germany developed tactical and strategic solutions rapidly and decisively defeating their enemies. This evolution began with Helmuth von Moltke in 1861 and his adaptation of technology for tactical and strategic operations. This evolution continued until the 1930s and became known as *blitzkrieg*.

⁵⁷ Ibid., page 47.

⁵⁸ Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought*, page 355.

Chapter Two

BLITZKRIEG: EVOLUTION OF TACTICS TO HYPER-TACTICS⁵⁹

"Catchwords ... are necessary for all those who are unable to think for themselves ... The following observations have no other object than to stimulate some one ... to think for himself and, whenever a catchword is uttered, to confront him with the question: Is this true?"

Hans von Seeckt⁶⁰

"... and nothing so comforts the military mind as the maxim of a great but dead general."

Barbara W. Tuchman, The Guns of August⁶¹

According to Michael Handel, Carl von Clausewitz was preoccupied with the importance of the battle and the military aspects of war. "Fighting is the central military act"⁶² according to Clausewitz. The purpose of fighting battles is to destroy or defeat the enemy. Clausewitz maintains that tactical success is the most direct route to the achievement of a nation's aim in war: to impose your will over the other nation.⁶³ To defeat an enemy you must by "death, injury or other means... make him stop fighting."⁶⁴ To destroy or annihilate the forces of your enemy is the dominant consideration in war. Therefore, the enemy's army is his

⁵⁹ Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, page 106.

⁶⁰ Mathew Cooper, *The German Army 1933-1945: Its Political and Military Failure*, (Chelsea, MI: Scarborough House Publishing, 1990), page 113.

⁶¹ Barbara W. Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1962), page 19.

⁶² Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, page 227.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

center of gravity. His army is the physical quantity that allows the enemy to resist your ability to impose your will on him.⁶⁵

To achieve decisive tactical victories the German Army developed the concept of *Vernichtungsgedanke* or the idea of annihilation.⁶⁶ Helmuth von Moltke originally developed this concept and Alfred von Schlieffen continued to refine it. The idea of battle of annihilation emphasized and combined technological innovations with the principles of tempo, surprise and decisive maneuver to encircle and destroy the enemy force. Through dominant maneuver on the enemy's flank or flanks, the Germans would avoid a battle of attrition. They would maneuver to construct far-reaching concentric encircling movements to form the *Kesselschlachten* or cauldron battles to surround and quickly destroy (annihilate) the enemy's force.⁶⁷ With the quick destruction of his force, the enemy would surrender or the German Army would continue to the next battle of annihilation. This series of battles occurred until the enemy's army was unable to resist any longer thus achieving the aim of imposing the German's will over their enemy. The use of the double envelopment (*Kesselschlachten*) became their methodology and the battle of annihilation (*Vernichtungsgedanke*) became their

⁶⁵ Ibid., page 258.

⁶⁶ Cooper, *The German Army 1933-1945: Its Political and Military Failure*, page 133.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

goal and determined the conduct of tactical battles and strategy for the German Army from 1861 to 1945.⁶⁸

The development of stormtroop tactics was the next evolutionary step in German tactics to avoid the battle of attrition and maintain the ability to maneuver. These tactics occurred as a method at the tactical unit level to break the stalemate on the Western Front in World War I. Stormtroop tactics relied on the use of highly trained small units to infiltrate rapidly through an enemy position and bypass any strong points encountered during the attack.⁶⁹ Less trained follow-on forces destroyed the bypassed units and strong points. These tactics combined with the technological advances in small arms and the accuracy of artillery restored speed, flexibility, offensive mobility and surprise to the battlefield allowing the Germans to breakthrough the Allies front lines.⁷⁰

These tactics continued the attempts by the Germans Army started with Moltke to avoid the frontal attack and to encircle the enemy force to destroy him. The Germans continued to use technology to enable their troops to maneuver and isolate the enemy. This new technology involved the introduction of the ground attack aircraft and artillery delivered chemical rounds to provide additional firepower and shock effect to the assault troops' attack.⁷¹ Although successful

⁶⁸ Ibid., page 134.

⁶⁹ James Corum, *The Roots of Blitzkrieg: Hans von Seeckt and German Military Reform*, (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992), page 5.

⁷⁰ Ibid., page 9. Also, see Cooper, *The German Army 1933-1945*, page 139.

⁷¹ Ibid., pages 18-20.

against the Italian Army at Caporetto in October-November 1917, it was less successful against the British and French in March 1918. The restrictive nature of the artillery devastated terrain from almost four years of a static frontline prevented the Germans from bringing their supplies and artillery forward to support the continuation of further attacks.⁷² Stormtroop troop tactics also did not remove the German Army's reliance on muscle power to sustain and maintain the offensive once the forces penetrated the Allied frontlines.⁷³ This lack of offensive sustainability and mobility robbed the German Army of its victory in 1918 and was the reason for the final step in the German evolution in tactics: *blitzkrieg*.

Shimon Naveh describes *blitzkrieg* as a hyper-violent offensive pattern designed to defeat an enemy by the use of surprise, speed and superiority in material and fire.⁷⁴ *Blitzkrieg* was the German's methodology to prevent the reoccurrence of the deadlock of the Western Front in World War I. It used the technology and its revolutionary promise to maintain offensive battlefield mobility and a to counter the increasing firepower and lethality of weapon systems.⁷⁵

Under the leadership of General Hans von Seeckt, the German Army developed a small offensively minded professional army. He continued the German traditions begun under Helmuth von Moltke and Alfred von Schlieffen

⁷² Ibid., page 9.

⁷³ Cooper, *The German Army*, page 141.

⁷⁴ Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, page 106.

⁷⁵ Cooper, *The German Army 1933-1945*, page 139.

emphasizing maneuver and implementing new technology to maintain the offense. General von Seeckt wanted an army possessing high quality, greater mobility, initiative and capable of annihilating the enemy before they could fully prepare for war.⁷⁶ During the 1920s and 1930s, the German Army continued to live by the idea of *Vernichtungsgedanke*: initiative, decisive maneuver and envelopment (*Kesselschlachten*). This idea dominated German strategy and tactics as the army developed a small grouping of armored (*panzer*) and motorized divisions in the 1930s to employ this concept.⁷⁷

Therefore, the concept of *blitzkrieg* was an evolutionary change in strategy and tactics to achieve a decisive victory over an opponent in a rapid, fast moving and violent battle of annihilation by encirclement. The mechanized and motorized units were the highly mobile and well-trained striking element of the German Army. These new units conducted the tactical encirclements necessary for a quick decisive victory. However, just as the German Army had in 1866, 1870 and failed to do in 1914-1918, the foot-mobile infantry had to annihilate of the enemy's army.⁷⁸ This new methodology worked well in the confined territories of Poland, the Low Countries and France, but failed in the vastness of the Soviet Union and North Africa where took a much longer time and space were less limited. The poor tactics of the Allies from 1939-1942 made the German tactics and strategy appear on the surface to look new, innovative and

⁷⁶ Ibid., page 136.

⁷⁷ Ibid., page 137.

⁷⁸ Ibid., page 138.

revolutionary. In reality, the German approach to warfare was evolutionary, not revolutionary. Their employment of technology was new but the conduct of battles and strategy was old almost to the point of being methodical in principle.

This training, technology and techniques were the foundation for the mental model Rommel would employ in North Africa. The German Army was at its zenith when he entered Africa and *blitzkrieg* appeared the reason. Rommel more than anyone else in the German Army represented *blitzkrieg* and its "revolutionary" methodology.

Chapter Three

ROMMEL AND THE TACTICIZATION OF STRATEGY

"The demands of strategy grow silent in the face of a tactical victory."

Count Helmuth von Moltke ⁷⁹

"Without a good plan for the whole campaign, it is absolutely impossible to fight a really good first battle... even though victory is won in the first battle, if the battle harms rather than helps the campaign as a whole, such a victory can only be reckoned as a defeat... Hence, before the first battle one must have a general idea of how the second, third, fourth, and even the final battle will be fought... It is absolutely essential to have a long-term plan."

Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Military Writings* ⁸⁰

On February 6 1941, The German High Command gave the newly promoted Lieutenant-General Erwin Rommel command of the German Afrika Korps. The Afrika Korps consisted of the Fifth Light Division and the Fifteenth Panzer Division. These units along with their corps level support would begin arriving at the port of Tripoli in mid-February and be complete by mid-April.⁸¹ Hitler gave Rommel command as a reward for his accomplishments in the campaign against France. As commander of the Seventh Panzer Division, Rommel continued to demonstrate his prowess and abilities as a tactical commander. He was a favorite of Hitler because of his successes and just as importantly because he was not a member of the elite Junker Military Class and not a member of the

⁷⁹ Helmuth von Moltke, *Moltke on the Art of War*, ed. Daniel Hughes (Novato: Presidio Press, 1993), page 47.

⁸⁰ Michael I. Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought*, (Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001) page 353.

⁸¹ Samuel Mitcham, *Triumphant Fox: Erwin Rommel and the Rise of the Afrika Korps*, (New York: Cooper Square Press, 1984), page 63.

German General Staff. Other than a short period during World War I, Rommel had not spent any time on a division or corps staff until he commanded the Seventh Panzer Division. He had disdain for the general staff and their education. He felt that the education they received limited their mental thinking and capabilities. This lack of training, experience and temperament would soon affect his ability to command at the operational level in North Africa.⁸² Rommel was an executor a brilliant tactician: aggressive, bold, quick thinking and acting, innovative and offensive minded. He was best at executing tactical battles and engagements not at formulating campaigns to link tactical tasks to accomplish strategic aims. This lack of an appreciation for the operational elements of time, space, means and purpose were reinforced by the lack of a strategic plan by the political and military leadership of Italy and Germany.

GERMAN STRATEGY FOR NORTH AFRICA

The expulsion of Italian forces from eastern Libya and the possible capture of Tripoli by the British forces in 1941 led to the commitment of German forces into North Africa. This commitment was an emergency measure to prevent the capture of North Africa and possibly causing Benito Mussolini's government to fall and sue for a separate peace.⁸³ Compounding this commitment, the second half of 1940 was a period of strategic indecision by the German High Command

⁸² Robinson, "The Rommel Myth," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, pages 82-83.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, page 82.

and Hitler in particular.⁸⁴ As early as July 1940 the High Command had begun to look into the technical issues of sending German forces to Libya to assist the Italian Army in a combined effort to defeat Britain. In September 1940, Mussolini turned down the German's offer to send forces to Libya to support Italian forces in their attack into Egypt. Hitler willingness to enter the Mediterranean region initially appeared as a collaborative effort with Italy and a commitment to an indirect or periphery strategy against Britain.

By mid-autumn this was the case as Hitler was fully committed to the attack on the Soviet Union and with Operation Sea Lion dead; operations in the Mediterranean and North Africa were the only ways to attack Britain.⁸⁵ As an indirect or peripheral strategy it would not provide Hitler the quick decision or victory he wanted, but it would prevent Britain from interfering with his effort on the European continent while he dealt with the Soviet Union. For Hitler, the attack on the USSR was more attractive for political, ideological, economic and strategic reasons.⁸⁶ Russia was the main effort all other operations were sideshows. Hitler did not want to lose North Africa or the Mediterranean since it could threaten his attack in Eastern Europe. Therefore, he sent his capable commander, Erwin Rommel with small armored force to help the Italian North African Command defend the remainder of Libya. Rommel was authorized to

⁸⁴ Geoffrey Megargee, *Inside Hitler's High Command*, (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000), page 92.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

conduct limited attacks to provide some maneuver space for the German-Italian forces by pushing the British back 200 miles from Tripoli to a place called El Agheila but anything beyond that was supposedly limited.⁸⁷

ROMMEL'S LACK OF AN OPERATIONAL DESIGN

"If success had depended, as in times gone by, on the strength of will of my men and their officers, then we would have overrun Alamein. But our sources of supply had dried up – thanks to the idleness and muddle of the supply authorities on the mainland."

*Field Marshal Erwin Rommel*⁸⁸

"We have our hands full trying to hold him back."

*Joseph Goebbels, April 1941*⁸⁹

When Rommel launched his first major offensive against the British on the 31 March 1941 he considered it would be a test of wills between himself and the incompetent British generals much as the battles in France the previous summer. Rommel respected the fighting qualities of the average British and Commonwealth soldier but had little or no respect for the British generalship.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Mitcham, *Triumphant Fox: Erwin Rommel and the Rise of the Afrika Korps*, page 63.

⁸⁸ John Ellis, *Brute Force: Allied Strategy and Tactics in the Second World War*, (New York: Viking Penguin Books, 1993), pages 254-255.

⁸⁹ Joseph Goebbels, *The Goebbels Diaries 1939-1941*, ed. and trans. by Fred Taylor, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1983), page 339. Goebbels on Rommel's unpredictable nature in North Africa.

⁹⁰ Mitcham, *Triumphant Fox: Erwin Rommel and the Rise of the Afrika Korps*, pages 125-129.

His attitude toward the average Italian soldier was the same and felt that they to could fight well if properly led and equipped.⁹¹

As Rommel received more forces and equipment, he became increasingly aggressive. He quickly realized the forces opposite his were new to the desert, poorly equipped and trained. He saw an opportunity to push the British back into Egypt and with the proper support he would take Cairo and the Suez Canal possibly removing the British from North Africa and the Middle East. On 19 March 1941, Rommel went to the Fuehrer's Headquarters to receive new instructions. He presented his proposal for a general offensive to take all of Egypt. He stated he would need two armored corps and their support units.⁹² This High Command rejected this proposal as unsupportable and restricted Rommel to not conducting any further offensive operations until the middle of May when the Fifteenth Panzer Division arrived in Africa. The German Army was preparing for the operations in the Balkans and the Soviet Union and did not have the assets available or the capability to support such a large force on the other side of the Mediterranean Sea. Within North Africa, the infrastructure did not exist to allow for the sustainment of such a large force. When questioned about how Rommel would support such an attack he answered, "That's quite immaterial to me. That's your pigeon."⁹³ He was to conduct an operational

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., pages 68-69. Also see Forty, *The Armies of Rommel*, page 116.

⁹³ David Irving, *The Trail of the Fox*, (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1977), page 70-71.

defense with limited offensive attacks to maintain the status: a defense near El Agheila until further notice. After all of the Afrika Korps arrived in May he could possibly attack to seize Benghazi. However, Rommel saw an opportunity and would not wait for the timid general staff officers to give their permission. After this meeting Rommel could not and would not accept the fact that his area of responsibility was now the sideshow to the sideshow.

This is the first indication of his lack of an operational focus. By the middle of March 1941, he had achieved his military endstate and purpose. Tripoli and the remainder of Libya were secure. Rommel's argument for attacking the British was to prevent them from establishing a strong defense that his forces would only defeat at great cost. This argument appears valid but the operational defense would not prevent him from conducting raids and limited attacks to deny the British the ability to establish a strong defense. Rommel himself said that desert fighting is like warfare at sea.⁹⁴ Forces move in the desert in an unrestricted manner taking advantage of the vastness to suddenly appear, attack, and quickly disappear into the desert vastness. Rommel failed to use operational art to employ tactical tasks to the German High Command's strategic concepts and aim.

His lack of military training and education at the operational level prevented him from analyzing the effects of time, space, means and purpose. This fact prevented him from formulating a comprehensive campaign plan. Rommel did what he knew best conduct a series of tactical attacks to destroy the enemy as

⁹⁴ Mitcham, *Triumphant Fox*, page 123.

the solution to the problem he faced in North Africa.⁹⁵ Rommel failed to ask himself two questions when he arrived in North Africa in February 1941. The first is: "What is to be accomplished?" and the second is: "What will constitute success?"⁹⁶ By not answering these questions at the beginning of the operation, he did not have the mental model of why he was conducting combat operations in North Africa. He lacked the cognitive creativity and tension through a lack of military training at the operational level and the vague guidance he received from Hitler and the High Command. His tactical successes lead to the tacticization of the Axis strategy in North Africa. As long as he continued to win battles and engagements, he received support from his political and military masters. What he failed to realize as well as his leadership he had accomplished what he needed to and was successful before Afrika Korps crossed the line of departure on 31 March 1941. If Rommel understood the art of operations and the operational level of war his conduct of the campaign would have been different.

⁹⁵ Robinson, "The Rommel Myth," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, page 81.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

"He was a brave man, and a very capable commander in small operations, but not really qualified for high command."

*Field Marshall Gerd von Rundstedt*⁹⁷

The conduct of the German-Italian campaign in North Africa will stand as an excellent example of tactical brilliance. Rommel's ability to see the battlefield, anticipate the enemy and overcome the greatest of odds is legendary in nature. This is why students of military art at the tactical level of war should study Rommel and his conduct of battles and engagements in World War I, France in 1940 and North Africa. Unfortunately, when Rommel stepped onto the scene in North Africa he took on the tasks of an operational commander, a position he was ill prepared for or capable of executing. Because of this, he will also stand as an example for the student of military art as an example of what an operational commander is not.

The lack of a strategic focus by his political and military leadership and his inability to see or understand what his purpose was in North Africa demonstrated his inability to formulate a feasible, supportable and acceptable campaign plan. Rommel and the German's conduct of war in North Africa will stand as an example of tactical victories eventually leading to operational failure. The inability of political and military leaders to define what success is and what they must accomplish is the real lesson of the North African campaign. For today's

⁹⁷ B. H. Liddell-Hart, *The German Generals Speak*, (New York: Quill, 1979), page 234. Field Marshall Rundstedt description of Rommel as a commander.

US Army officer the study and understanding of the operational level of warfare and operational art is even more critical today than it was in 1941. The US military having the capability to employ forces anywhere in the world should understand what the political reasons are for the employment and how they relate to the overall employment of the nation's diplomatic, informational and economic powers. The operational commander must have the cognitive skills (creativity and tension) to take the politically abstract and create the physical tactical tasks to accomplish the strategic aims. He answers the questions: "What is to be accomplished?" and "What will constitute success?" and from there he establishes the relationship between the tactical, operational and strategic levels of war in time, space, means and purpose. Historically, without understanding this relationship tactical victory does not lead to operational success. Without a military foundation in the art of operations and the operational level of war the commander will not correctly visualize, describe and direct a campaign that will support his political leadership.

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